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II. DEPARTMENT OF PHILANTHROPY, CHARITIES AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Report of the British Inter-Department Committee of Physical Deterioration—

This Committee was appointed by the Duke of Devonshire, Lord President of the Council, in September, 1903, to make a preliminary inquiry into the allegations concerning the deterioration of certain classes of the population as shown by the large percentage of rejections for physical causes of recruits for the Army. The Terms of Reference were subsequently enlarged, to determine the steps that should be taken to furnish the Government with periodical data for an accurate comparative estimate of the health and physique of the people; to indicate the causes of physical deterioration in certain classes and to point out the means by which it can be most effectually diminished. The Committee was composed of eight experts, connected with various departments of the government and has performed its duty with the usual British thoroughness and care.

At the outset of the enquiry, the Director-General of the Army Medical Staff said that the question was not that there was evidence of progressive physical deterioration of the race, but the fact that from 40 to 60 per cent. of the men who present themselves for enlistment are found to be physically unfit for military service. To this Professor Cunningham of the British Association for the Advancement of Science rejoins that the evidence which is obtained for recruiting statistics is unreliable, "because the class from which the recruits are derived varies from time to time with the conditions of the labor market. When trade is good and employment is plentiful it is only from the lowest stratum of the people that the Army receives its supply of men; when, on the other hand, trade is bad, a better class of recruit is available. Consequently the records of the recruiting department of the Army do not deal with a homogeneous sample of the people taken from one distinct class."

The Army witnesses admitted that the real lesson of the recruiting figures was the failure of the Army to attract a good type of recruit. Most of the men who want to enlist are street loafers—what Charles Booth calls "hereditary casuals;" who hate regular work and crave excitement. The Committee says that this also tends to explain the drain from desertion among those who find themselves disappointed in the hopes of an easy existence. "A close comparison between Admiralty and War Office statistics is hardly possible, as in the first place Naval regulations for medical examinations are more stringent, especially as regards eyesight and teeth, while on the other hand the great bulk of recruits for the Naval Service are probably drawn from a higher social level."

The British Association for the Advancement of Science appointed a committee at its last Congress to organize Anthropometric Investigation, in which connection Professor Cunningham says:

"In spite of the marked variations which are seen in the physique of the different classes of the people of Great Britain, anthropologists believe, with good reason, that there is a mean physical standard, which is the inheritance of the people as a whole and that no matter how far certain sections of the people

may deviate from this by deterioration (produced by the causes referred to) the tendency of the race as a whole will always be to maintain the inherited mean. In other words, those inferior bodily characters which are the result of poverty (and not vice, such as syphilis and alcoholism) and which are therefore acquired during the lifetime of the individual, are not transmissible from one generation to another. To restore, therefore, the classes in which this inferiority exists to the mean standard of national physique, all that is required is to improve the conditions of living and in one or two generations the ground that has been lost will be recovered."

Professor Cunningham brought forward an elaborate scheme for what would practically be a physical census of the United Kingdom, which was backed up by the British Association and by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons. The Committee evidently felt that this was too large an undertaking, but suggested a modification of it, a survey being mainly centered upon the youth of the country, in co-operation with all the forces of government, general and local, and with the large manufactories, hospitals, chambers of agriculture, trade unions and benefit societies, universities and public schools and insurance agencies. The tests used by local authorities should be standardized.

In substantiation of its belief that physical deterioration is not general, the Committee presents the following summary of the conclusions of Dr. Eichholz, Inspector of Schools:

(1) "I draw a clear distinction between physical degeneracy on the one hand and inherited retrogressive deterioration on the other.

(2) "With regard to physical degeneracy, the children frequenting the poorer schools of London and the large towns betray a most serious condition of affairs, calling for ameliorative and arrestive measures, the most impressive features being the apathy of parents as regards the school, the lack of parental care of children, the poor physique, powers of endurance and educational attainments of the children attending school.

(3) "Nevertheless, even in the poorer districts there exist schools of a type above the lowest, which show a marked upward and improving tendency, physically and educationally—though the rate of improvement would be capable of considerable acceleration under suitable measures.

(4) "In the better districts of the towns there exist public elementary schools frequented by children not merely equal but often superior in physique and attainments to rural children. And these schools seem to be at least as numerous as schools of the lowest type.

(5) "While there are, unfortunately, very abundant signs of physical defect traceable to neglect, poverty and ignorance, it is not possible to obtain any satisfactory or conclusive evidence of hereditary physical deterioration—that is to say, deterioration of a gradual retrogressive permanent nature, affecting one generation more acutely than the previous. There is little, if anything, in fact, to justify the conclusion that neglect, poverty and parental ignorance, serious as their results are, possess any marked hereditary effect, or that heredity plays any significant part in establishing the physical degeneracy of the poorer population.

(6) "In every case of alleged progressive hereditary deterioration among

the children frequenting an elementary school, it is found that the neighborhood has suffered by the migration of the better artisan class, or by the influx of worse population from elsewhere.

(7) "Other than the well-known specifically hereditary diseases which affect poor and well-to-do alike, there appears to be very little real evidence on the pre-natal side to account for the widespread physical degeneracy among the poorer population. There is, accordingly, every reason to anticipate, rapid amelioration of physique so soon as improvement occurs in external conditions, particularly as regards food, clothing, overcrowding, cleanliness, drunkenness and the spread of practical knowledge of home management.

(8) "In fact, all evidence points to active, rapid improvement, bodily and mental, in the worst districts, so soon as they are exposed to better circumstances, even the weaker children recovering at a later age from the evil effects of infant life.

(9) "Compulsory school attendance, the more rigorous scheduling of children of school age and the abolition of school fees in elementary schools, have swept into the schools an annually increasing proportion of children during the last thirty years. These circumstances are largely responsible for focussing public notice on the severer cases of physical impairment—just as, at a previous stage in educational development, they established the need for special training of the more defined types of physical deficiency—the blind, the deaf, the feeble-minded and the crippled.

(10) "The apparent deterioration in Army recruiting material seems to be associated with the demand for youthful labor in unskilled occupations, which pay well, and absorb adolescent population more and more completely year by year. Moreover, owing to the peculiar circumstances of apprenticeship which are coming to prevail in this country, clever boys are often unable to take up skilled work on leaving school. This circumstance puts additional pressure on the field of unskilled labor and coupled with the high rates of wages for unskilled labor, tends to force out of competition the aimless wastrel population at the bottom of the intellectual scale and this, unfortunately, becomes more and more the material available for Army recruiting purposes.

(11) "Close attention seems to be needed in respect of the physical condition of young girls who take up industrial employment between the ages of fourteen and eighteen. The conditions under which they work, rest and feed doubtless account for the rapid falling off in physique which so frequently accompanies the transition from school to work."

After a resumé of the machinery which exists for improving housing conditions, for sanitation, for medical service, factory and labor regulation, etc., the Committee says:

"On the other hand, in large classes of the community there has not been developed a desire for improvement commensurate with the opportunities offered to them. Laziness, want of thrift, ignorance of household management and particularly the choice and preparation of food, filth, indifference to parental obligations, drunkenness, largely infect adults of both sexes and press with terrible severity upon their children. The very growth of the family resources, upon which statisticians congratulate themselves, accompanied as it frequently is

by great unwisdom in their application to raising the standard of comfort, is often productive of the most disastrous consequences. 'The people perish for lack of knowledge,' or, as it is elsewhere put, 'lunacy increases with the rise of wages and the greater spending power of the operative class; while a falling wage-rate is associated with a decrease of drunkenness, crime, and lunacy.' Local authorities, moreover, especially in the rural districts, are often reluctant to use their powers and in these circumstances progress, unless stimulated by a healthy public conscience in matters of hygiene, is slower than might be wished."

The evidence presented by the Committee in regard to overcrowding and unsanitary development reads like a chapter from the report of the New York Tenement House Commission. Evidently there is a vast missionary field still untouched in many—if not most—of the manufacturing cities of England and Scotland. Edinburgh, Sheffield, Newcastle, Dundee, Manchester, to take a few cities at random, are all given dishonorable mention in the report of the Committee, which recommends that the local authority should treat an unhealthy or overcrowded house as a nuisance and dispossess the tenants. "The permanent difficulties that attach to the problem reside in the character of the people themselves, their feebleness and indifference, their reluctance to move and their incapability of moving." The Committee also considers tentatively the expedients which have been suggested for disposing of habitual vagrants.

The Committee are not prepared to indicate the exact lines upon which these ought to be modeled; "a large latitude should probably be left to each locality in healing its own sores, but as a last resource compulsory detention in labor colonies would have to be resorted to and the children of those made subject to this experiment lodged in public nurseries, until their parents were improved up to the point at which they could resume charge."

The attention of the Committee was prominently called to the effect on public health of the pollution of the atmosphere. A Manchester witness said: "The condition of the air by its direct effect on lungs and skin is the cause of much disease and physical deterioration. By cutting off much of the scant supply of sunlight which is all that Manchester at best would be allowed by its gloomy climate to receive, it injures health. The filthiness of the air makes those inhabitants of all parts of Manchester who value cleanliness most unwilling to ventilate their dwellings. By killing nearly all vegetation and by its other effects, the foulness of the air contributes much to that general gloominess of the town which led Mr. Justice Day to say in explanation of the prevalence of drunkenness in the town, that to get drunk 'is the shortest way out of Manchester.' "

The chief causes of this pollution are alleged to be the non-enforcement of the law for the prevention of smoke from factories, the imposition of inadequate penalties, the neglect to limit works which produce noxious vapors to special areas where they can be closely supervised and so do the least possible amount of harm; and lastly, the absence of any provision in the law compelling the occupants of dwellings to produce the least possible quantity of smoke.

On the point of prosecutions, it was stated that "there are people in Manchester who systematically pollute the air and pay the fine, finding it much

cheaper to do so than to put up new plant. The trial of such cases before benches of magistrates composed of manufacturers or their friends creates an atmosphere of sympathy for the accused and it was alleged that magistrates who had sought to give effect to the law encountered the indifference and sometimes the positive opposition of their colleagues."

The Committee also offers some general testimony in regard to the effect of alcoholism, which is well summarized thus:

"Next to the urbanization of people and intimately associated with it, as the outcome of many of the conditions it creates the question of 'drink' occupies a prominent place among the causes of degeneration. The close connection between a craving for drink and bad housing, bad feeding, a polluted and depressing atmosphere, long hours of work in overheated and often ill-ventilated rooms, only relieved by the excitement of town life, is too self-evident to need demonstration, nor unfortunately is the extent of the evil more open to dispute."

The statement is made that drinking habits among women of the working classes are certainly growing, factory labor being mentioned as a predisposing cause. Reference is also made, in this connection, to the want of easily accessible and attractive means of recreation, which make the public-house the only certain center of social relaxation. On the other hand, testimony is offered as to the deterioration due to constant tea drinking! We quote from the report:

"Another fruitful and one of the most unsuspected causes of deterioration lies in the long ingrained habit of tea drinking at breakfast and other times in the factories and foundries of the city. Tea drinking, if it really were so, might not be harmful, but unfortunately the mixture drunk can hardly be called tea at all. More frequently than not boiling water is poured on too large an amount of poor tea leaves and is left to stand until the tea has become almost a stew and this dark and nasty mixture is drunk, sometimes three and four times a day, by hundreds of young lads, setting up frequently various forms of varicocele and is responsible for several kindred evils (excessive costiveness, etc.) We are informed by the late Chief Recruiting Officer in Manchester some time ago that a very large proportion of young men rejected for the Army had been refused on account of ailments brought about by this practice."

Over thirty pages of the report deal with the conditions attending the life of the juvenile population. In connection with the waste that goes on under the name of Infant Mortality, the Committee says:

"Among the most highly organized nations, where the tendency to a decrease in the birth-rate becomes more or less noticeable, the means by which infant mortality can be averted, present a social problem of the first importance. Unfortunately in the volume of vital statistics, from which so many consolatory reflections are drawn, infant mortality remains a dark page.

"Three facts stand out prominently as the result of this investigation: First, that infantile mortality in this country has not decreased materially during the last twenty-five years, notwithstanding that the general death-rate has fallen considerably; secondly, that the mortality among illegitimate children is enormously greater than among children born in wedlock; thirdly, that about one-half the mortality occurs in the first three months of life."

Much evidence is furnished to confirm these conclusions. The infant death-rate in a number of English and Scotch manufacturing cities was shown to average from 200 to 236 per 1000 births. In Dundee, Sheffield and many Lancashire towns it is a common thing to find a woman who has had a dozen children and has lost all but one or two of them. The report comments on the difficulty of getting complete figures as to infant mortality, owing to the absence in Great Britain of any registration of still-births!

"Every witness who was questioned on the subject agreed in deploring the present neglect and the Committee are emphatically of opinion that still-births should be registered, as apart from the advantages a system of registration would have in making it easier to bring home instances of malpractice, a knowledge of the facts as to the frequency of still-births would be of great value towards elucidating the causes of infant mortality by throwing light on the ante-natal conditions prejudicial to the survival of the *fœtus*."

The subject of infant insurance was also considered. "As to the propriety of interfering with this practice different opinions were expressed, though it was the general view that it contributed to parental negligence. On the whole it was thought that if restricted so as to cover the actual expenses of burial, its principal abuses would disappear. The evidence of Sir Lambert Ormsby, President of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, upon Irish practice in this regard, pointed to the prevalence of a very low view on the part of many medical men in respect to their obligations towards the security of infant life under the conditions touching insurance in that country.

"The Committee do not think that upon the evidence they are in a position to make any definite recommendation on this point, but they consider that the operation of the practice should be carefully watched."

So far as the Committee are in a position to judge, "the influence of heredity in the form of the transmission of any direct taint is not a considerable factor in the production of degenerates."

In connection with the employment of mothers late in pregnancy and too soon after childbirth, a very general agreement was expressed that the factory employment of mothers had a bad effect on the offspring, both direct and indirect, but opinions differ as to the extent of the evil and the practical steps that could be taken to remedy it. It is to be found in the most acute form in the pottery districts and in textile mills. Speaking from an extensive experience in the potteries, Miss Garnett declared that "married women's labor was really the root of all the mischief; the children are born very weakly, they are improperly fed and placed in the charge of incapable people. She admitted the impossibility of interference by any general prohibition, but thought the period during which women are not permitted to return to work after their confinement should be extended.

"The existing law requires that no occupier of a factory shall knowingly allow a woman to be employed within four weeks after she has given birth to a child. Thus no legal offense arises unless the occupier, with a full knowledge of the facts, is yet responsible for the employment, a situation which, in the ordinary conditions attending factory labor, it is almost impossible to prove. It is needless to say that in these circumstances prosecutions are infrequent or

abortive, and though there may be a pretty uniform observation of the law, cases in which it is broken are numerous in some districts, amounting it is thought to general evasion."

One point was explained by several witnesses, that "great harm is done and suffering occasioned to the women by their remaining at work too long before confinement as well as by their returning too soon after it."

Miss Anderson the chief factory inspector notes "the general neglect of voluntary agencies for helping mothers before and after confinement, to take care of infant life, even where such agencies exist. In Lancashire, where, it is said, insurances of all kinds abound, no form of provident society exists to which women could contribute while still able to earn wages, nor has any attempt been made to organize a maternity fund, towards which both employer and employed might contribute. The existence of such a fund at Muelhausen is said to have resulted in the reduction of infant mortality by half. The Committee would strongly urge the adoption of such methods of voluntary assistance and think it not improbable that endowments may be found in many places which could be utilized as the nucleus for a considerable amount of charitable effort in this direction."

The Committee has gone at some length into the matter of infant dietary.

"A decrease at the present time in breast feeding is generally admitted to be the case in all classes of society, at any rate in the urban districts. With the poor, it seems fair to say that their failure in this respect is due to inability rather than unwillingness, especially in view of the fact that as long as it can be properly continued breast feeding is much the most economical way of nourishing an infant. It is, however, no doubt, the case that women are often unwilling to nurse their own children because it interferes with their going to work."

In connection with the importance of being able to obtain a sufficient supply of good cow's milk "the Committee are confronted with a great deal of evidence to the effect that it is next to impossible to ensure such a supply, at any rate to the poorer classes. It is not a little curious that, while people in the rural districts have a growing difficulty in obtaining milk because it pays better to send it into the towns, the great mass of the dwellers in towns are in no better case than formerly. There is in fact a great lack of organization in the distribution of this prime necessity, a great want of knowledge as to its value and very inadequate means for its preservation from the most obvious sources of pollution."

The report also deals with parental ignorance and neglect and calls attention to the frequent cases of children being smothered by careless or drunken parents, by "overlying," the cases generally occurring between Friday night and Monday morning.

Much evil arises from the chronic sleeplessness fostered by the conditions of life so largely prevalent. The lack of sleep from which town children suffer was mentioned by several witnesses as a cause of degeneration. Children in the slums are habitually up till late at night.

A large body of evidence was tendered as to the organization and operations of the Manchester and Salford Ladies' Public Health Society and the Committee had the advantage of examining on the subject Mrs. Worthington, one

of its principal members, and Mrs. Bostock, one of the Health Visitors it employs. "The society, which has been in existence for over twenty-five years, has for its object the discovery of all those conditions that are adverse to public health and especially the bringing within the knowledge of the mothers among the poor such information as will enable them to do their duty by their children. The poorer parts of both towns are divided into districts, each under the supervision of one or more of the ladies who constitute the Society, and, subject to their directions, a number of Health Visitors, who are in part paid by the corporation, undertake the duty of visiting every house in which the birth of a child is reported, with the object of educating mothers in the best methods of bringing up young children. By these means, Mrs. Worthington stated that a good deal of influence has been brought to bear upon them to adopt regular hours and not be quite so miscellaneous in their feeding operations, and it is said that they now have acquired some settled notion of what is the best type of food to give children. Incidentally and very largely the labors of the Health Visitors in this connection bring to their knowledge all sorts of insanitary conditions, arising from overcrowding, stopped drains and structural defects, which they proceed to report to the municipality on a form provided for the purpose. As the result, an inspector is at once sent and the evil is put right before very long. In a recent report of the Society's work, it is said that the Health Visitors have made 30,364 inspections of houses and have reported 1500 cases of insanitary conditions and the Medical Officer of Manchester testifies that the effect is marked in the poorer districts of the city and that "an improvement on former conditions can now be generally discovered." The report goes on to quote from one of the Superintendents that the poor "look upon the Health Visitor as their best friend and there are few homes where she is not made welcome."

Apropos of the need of Medical Inspection of School Children the report says:

"In a country without compulsory military service the period of school life offers the State its only opportunity for taking stock of the physique of the whole population and securing to its profit the conditions most favorable to healthy development. While the schools on the whole seem to be in a good state, Mrs. Greenwood drew a sad picture of the dirt and darkness in some of the Sheffield schools, and Dr. Kelly, Bishop of Ross, taxed the National Board with indifference to the warming of schools, from which children suffered acutely. It appears that whatever fuel is used in schools in Ireland has to be procured by voluntary contributions or brought there by the children themselves and it is not an uncommon thing for children to take a sod or two of turf to school on a winter's morning. Dr. Kelly goes on:

"I might set it down as one of the causes of the poor physical development in Ireland that the school children are unfairly, in fact I might say cruelly, treated in the schools themselves. I see how many of these little children go to school all the winter barefooted and in some instances they go to school where there is no fire. The country children have to travel a couple of miles to school; a great many of them have no cloak or shawl, or anything to cover them. Ireland is rather a rainy country and they go wet into the school and sit down there shivering all day."

The Committee think that a system under which the infliction of such suffering on poor children is possible requires amendment.

The importance of physical exercise and organized games is dwelt upon and Boston, U. S. A., was taken as an example of the best practice in this respect. The teaching of cooking and household management is also emphasized. It is evident from the statements and recommendations made by the Committee, that Great Britain is a generation behind the practice of the United States in this matter of special teaching for "retarded children," and in provision of juvenile Courts and the Probation System.

One of the most interesting discussions which took place in the Committee was over proposals in regard to ensuring adequate nourishment of school children. As one witness said:

"We have got to the point where we must face the question whether the logical culmination of free education is not free meals in some form or other, it being cruelty to force a child to go to learn what it has not strength to learn."

But he agreed that the parents should be made to pay if possible. "The opinion of Mr. S. C. Loch is worthy of consideration, as being presumably the official view of the Charity Organization Society. He found fault with the existing systems of voluntary feeding, as 'purely a movement against destitution without regard to education;' he stated his belief that no child should ever be fed without thorough investigation into the circumstances of its family, and no free meal given except in special cases and then only as secretly as possible; but he admitted the necessity in special cases. The feeding should not be at the school, though it does not appear from his evidence where it ought to be. He instanced the difficulty in former days, before the Free Education Act of 1891, of getting educational fees out of parents, and argued there would be similar difficulty in getting feeding fees. Both Mr. Loch and Mr. Shirley Murphy thought that in cases of real destitution the Poor Law Administration should always be brought into play and not kept out by any system of free feeding.

The Committee speaks of the "somewhat dangerous doctrine that free meals are the necessary concomitant of free education. Education is a great social need, which individual citizens are, as a rule, not able to provide for their children on a sufficient scale, but food, like clothing and lodging, is a personal necessity, which in a well-ordered society it is not inherently impossible for parents to provide; and the effort to supplement their deficiencies and to correct the effects of their neglect, should aim, in the first instance, at the restoration of self-respect and the enforcement of parental duty."

The report also notices special subjects, which bear on the general purpose of this inquiry, such as syphilis, insanity, defective eyesight, deafness and dental deterioration.

In its elaborate and somewhat indefinite summary of recommendations, it is suggested that a permanent anthropometric survey should be organized; that a Register of Sickness—not confined to infectious diseases—should be established; that the time has come for dealing drastically with overcrowding; that the State should "take charge of the lives of those who are incapable of independent existence up to the standard of decency which it imposes;" that the medical inspection of factories and employees be extended; that the inspec-

tion of workshops, as distinguished from factories, should be strengthened ; that teachers should expatiate on the "moral wickedness of drinking" (*sic*); and that the sale of tobacco and cigarettes to children be prohibited. There are fifty-three specific recommendations in this report, of which many are thoroughly practical and nearly all are sensible; a few are, however, either chimerical or of doubtful value. The report is a volume of 137 pages of octavo and is amply furnished with statistical data. It is impossible to do more than suggest its importance in this necessarily brief summary. It can be purchased through any English bookseller for one shilling and two pence.

E. E. W.

The Committee on Lectures and Libraries of the Board of Education of the City of New York has recently published its report on the cost of free lectures to the people which were held during the winter of 1903-1904. Dr. Henry M. Leipziger, the Supervisor of Lectures, is full of splendid enthusiasm and has carried this important educational work forward with great executive ability and absolute sanity of judgment. The lecture courses are systematically organized with the definite purpose of stimulating study, co-operating with the public library and museum, encouraging discussion and bringing the best methods of the best teachers to bear upon the great problem of the diffusion of culture among all citizens. He reports that the success of the sixteenth season of public lectures has proven the value of this system of education for adults. The number of lecture centers was increased (from 128 in 1903) to 143. Four thousand six hundred and sixty-five lectures were given by four hundred and fifty-three lecturers and the total attendance as shown by the statistics in later pages of this report, reached one million one hundred and thirty-four thousand. The increase in the number of lecture centers was made in response to requests for their establishment and the attendance is gratifying when the unusual severity of the winter, the fact that the lectures closed earlier than usual, and that there were other drawbacks to the gathering of large assemblies, are considered.

Observations on Free Coffee and Sandwich Distribution in a New York Mission.¹—"You might not believe it, my friend, but there are probably a thousand men on or near the Bowery tonight who haven't the price of a meal or a lodging. That's why we give out a thousand rolls and a thousand cups of coffee every morning at one o'clock from the first of January to the first of April. Drop in some night and I'll show you what the men are like and how it is done."

Being interested in verifying the truth of the introductory statement, I decided a few nights later to accept the invitation, but not exactly as given, as I have learned that there are far more interesting and far more instructive ways of "seeing what the men are like" than by just looking on.

We started out at about midnight, my chum and I, fellow-tramps for the time being, if such we might be called—our objective point, the Bowery Mission. I wore two pairs of summer trousers, a much bedraggled striped and torn jersey—a relic of college days—an old coat and a discarded summer raincoat, slouch hat and dirty shoes. Ruffled hair, beard of two days' growth, face and hands smeared as much as the most fastidious loafer could wish for, together with the usual

¹ Contributed by Frank Everett Wing.

complement of pipe and tobacco, added the finishing touches to my disguise.

It was one of the coldest of winter nights. We were obliged to walk at a rapid pace in order to keep warm, and as we turned the corner of Fourth Street on to the Bowery, an unusually cold blast of wind warned us that the worst was yet to come. It required but a few minutes of this to cause us to realize, partially at least, the terrors cold winter has for the great army of the poorly clad that nightly walks our city streets. Now and then a belated pedestrian squinted out at us from the recesses of his upturned coat collar. More often we were not permitted so much as a glance as we half loitered on our way. It being too cold for pleasure seekers and roisterers, few people were to be seen, save now and then a lone crusader, who showed by his appearance and the direction in which he was going that his mecca was the same as ours.

Soon we were near enough to see the long dark line of bent-over shivering forms, already there ahead of us, waiting for the doors to open and the feeding to begin. On warmer nights I have seen by actual count fully eight hundred men in line. In the middle of this windy winter's night, with hands in their pockets, dancing from one foot to another to keep warm, with a song or a joke here, with a remark about the cold there, with impatience exhibited everywhere, this long line of humanity was waiting for what? A cup of hot coffee and a dry, unbuttered roll. This was the crowd we were about to join.

Many times, when looking at such a sight as this, I have thought how great must be the need to induce a man to belittle himself so much as to be willing to fall into a beggar's line for a loaf of bread. It has seemed that it would be extremely hard for a man to do this, even as an experiment, without the incentive of hunger to make it easier. I will confess that there was some such feeling in my mind then as I approached. Strange to say, however, when once a part of it, there was not the least touch of shame at being there. This shows how easy it is to get in line and to go with the crowd.

Soon a movement in front told that the game was on. Following the crowd we groped our way, or rather, were jostled by those behind, down the stairs into the basement.

From the attendants at the door each received a large roll and a cup of coffee as he passed by and was then directed further on toward the rear of the room. After the manner of most of those about me, I hastened to wash down my first roll in silence in order to take my place at the end of the line outside so as not to miss a second ration. This was easily managed; for, while the crowd was large, there was provision for more than twice as many.

With my second supply on hand, I had an opportunity to test the completeness of my disguise. Partly with the idea of getting into a place where I could eat quietly by myself, and partly to be able to study the rest at a distance, I stepped half thoughtlessly into an empty corner. I was not permitted to enjoy this privilege long, however, for a gruff voice sang out, "Come there, you! Get out of that corner. That ain't no loafing place for such as you."

Looking up, I saw it was my friend of a few nights before, the doorkeeper, addressing me. He did not recognize me in my new role and I did not take the trouble to enlighten him, but made haste to obey the by no means uncertain command.

Let us glance at the personnel of the group in the center of which I found myself. Poorly clothed? Yes, many of them, but by no means all. Physically unfit to work? Very few. Truly and hopelessly homeless? Not many more. Of society; coarser and lower tenth? All, undoubtedly. I am sure I am not overstating the facts when I affirm that fully three-fourths of the men here were being given food that they ought to have paid for. Many appeared to be workmen, many more appeared to be men who occasionally work but who were out of a job; others were clearly able to work if they wanted to. Some had evidently come in after a night's dissipation at one of the near-by saloons. They showed that they had been drinking. Some had money in their pockets; one man had a loaf of bread that he had received at twelve o'clock in Fleischman's "bread line." With possibly a few exceptions, all could have earned food and lodging if they had cared to go to the woodyard for an honest half-day's work. They would prefer, however, to wait around half the night, and to get something for nothing in the end, than to do this.

It was now nearly two o'clock. Save for a few stragglers hanging about the door, the crowd had all disappeared. As it was part of our plan to learn where the men spent the night, we had picked out three of the worst looking characters with this end in view. They bore all the external markings of the vagrant, both in dress and in physical appearance. We followed them at as close a distance as we could without creating suspicion. Once they stopped on a street corner, apparently to argue as to where they should go. Then they walked on again. Finally they halted in front of the door of one of the darkest and dingiest of the Bowery Lodging Houses. Not a sign of life could be seen from the street; all was apparently dark inside. After some indecision one of the men stepped to the door and gave a signal, but received no answer. Another signal was tried. After a little waiting, the door opened and the men disappeared inside.

When we were near enough, we read the words "Alligator Hotel" over the doorway. As we waited, others came along and after giving what seemed to be the same sort of signal, they, too, were admitted.

At this juncture a policeman appeared. We asked him the nature of the place inside.

"I don't know; never have been in there," said he. "A lodging house, restaurant, and 'gin-mill,' probably, of the cheapest sort."

"Do you think it safe for anyone to go inside?"

"Oh, yes, undoubtedly, if you can get in," said he. "Go ahead and try it, if you want to. I'll wait out here on the sidewalk."

This was precisely what I did want to do. So, leaving my companion with the policeman a little distance up the street, I stepped to the door and rang the bell once. No answer. I rang again, this time twice, whereupon the door quietly opened and I found myself standing in the dark hallway. While walking through this long, narrow, unlighted passageway, I could hear voices in the distance and could see glints of light coming through the cracks and keyhole of a door at the end. Relying on my disguise for protection, I opened the door and entered the room beyond. Here I found a large dimly-lighted back room, a bar extending along one side, with doors entering the darkened restaurant in front. The floor was strewn with sawdust, and a large round, old-fashioned stove stood

in the center of the room. Standing around the stove and sitting at the tables were perhaps a hundred men, some talking, some smoking, some drinking, some dozing, some asleep—all of the lowest crust of humanity, forlorn, homeless, and one would almost be tempted to say hopeless.

My entrance was unnoticed, save by a waiter who happened to be passing as I opened the door. I ordered a cigar, put it in my pocket, and joined the group of men near the stove. Soon I gave one man some tobacco with which to make a cigarette and another filled his pipe at my expense. This act seemingly removed all social barriers and I was readily admitted to equal fellowship with the rest. Even here the men had money to spend for drinks. In fact, nothing else could be bought at this hour. I saw requests for soup and sandwiches refused, but big schooners of soapy-looking beer were being served, as well as something that passed for whiskey at five cents a glass.

My friend of the cigarette was the most communicative, and I soon found myself in his good graces. He had a somewhat superior air from which I inferred that he condescended to enter such a place as this only under conditions of extreme necessity. Later I found this to be the case. He said he was trying to get through the winter by shoveling coal. He had had hard luck this week and had not earned enough to live on. He worked for twenty-five cents a load and relied on the people for whom he worked to supply him with a dinner or a tip now and then.

"But it's mighty hard pulling this winter, my friend. This ain't the first time I have been obliged to come in here."

"Why don't you go to the Municipal Lodging House?" I suggested.

"Municipal Lodging House? Not much for this chap! He knows better than to go to that place and be 'chucked' to the 'Island.' If your head's level, you won't go there more than once. Do you know what they do with a feller? Why, whenever help runs short on the 'Island' they make a raid on the 'Dump.' That's what we call the Municipal Lodging House. They did it the other night and got ten men shipped over to work for 'em the next day. Stay clear of that place is my advice to you."

"I've just been down to the Bowery Mission," he continued. "That's a 'cinch' place to get something to eat."

"So've I been there too, old man," I replied, feeling that I had at last struck common ground. "I got round twice."

"H'm, that's nothing; I went 'round four times. I've got this much left for breakfast," said he, as he pulled a couple of rolls out of his pocket. "Do you want to know how I did it?"

"Yes, I rather think I would like to know."

"Well, you see, you have to work fast. I ate my first roll and drank my coffee, but after that I didn't stop for coffee. I just took my roll and skipped out to get in line again as quick as I could. When the line ain't too big, you can do this. Then I came up here, and I've got to hang around all night, because I haven't the price of a bed."

"How do you do it? I'm a bit green at this business," was my next inquiry.

"Oh, it's easy enough. You just stay where you are. If you get a chance to sit down, take it. If not, you'll have to stand up or lie on the floor. No one will bother you till half-past five to-morrow morning, when the porter will come

and wake you up. Then you can buy a cup of coffee for two cents, and nothing more will be said. That's all you have to do. That's what all these fellows are going to do. That's what I suppose I've got to do to-night."

What other secrets may have been disclosed, I cannot tell; for at this point in the conversation my friend, who had been waiting outside with the policeman, entered and signaled for me to join him. I had already learned many things that I wanted to know—enough for one night, at least. So, with a manufactured excuse, I left my new acquaintance to his prospects of a bunk on the floor, while I went on to a cleaner and a more comfortable bed.

Had I yielded to the impulse to give him the price of a lodging on the spot, I might have disclosed my identity, which I was not yet ready to do. More than all this, I would have been guilty myself of the same offense that I am charging so many societies of committing against this vagrant class.